174 is supposed to have been completed by the beginning of the Christian era. Soon after that the Finns migrated to Finland and settled the area north of the Gulf of Finland.

172 Archeologists, however, disagree with this linguistic theory. Their excavations have brought to light evidence that the present Estonian area was occupied long before the birth of Christ and that no change of inhabitants occurred around the beginning of the Christian era. According to theories of the Estonian archeologist Dr. R. Indreko, the Finno-Ugric peoples came to the East Baltic region from Central Europe about 7000 B. C., after the glacial period, in the early Stone Age. They were reindeer hunters and later they became fishermen also. Some of these peoples later migrated eastward and settled by the Volga and the Ural Mountains.

172 while the others remained on Baltic shores.

[13] To the south of the Estonians lived the Livonians and the Baltic peoples: the Latvians, and, Lithuanians in the northeast, their Vote, Vepsian and Finnish-speaking relatives in Ingermanland. East of Lake Peipus at this time was a thin sprinkling of Slavs.

Until about 1300 B. C. the inhabitants of present-day Estonia lived around rivers and lakes, ekeing a livelihood mainly from fishing and hunting. Later on some primitive agriculture, as well as a new custom of burial of the dead in underground graves, was introduced from Central Europe.

Trade with the Goths living at the mouth of the Vistula River and their own position as cultural moderators between the Roman Empire and the Nordic peoples speeded up the cultural

172 development of the Baltic peoples. Even after the fall of the Empire the settlements continued to grow and Läänemaa and Saaremaa were next to be inhabited.

The period from 800 to 1200 A. D., the Viking Epoch, saw a lively commercial interchange with the Scandinavian Vikings with whom the Estonians often participated in raids to neighboring countries. This period brought wealth and a rapid cultural rise for them as well as a development of agricultural and stock-breeding methods. During this time the country was divided into counties (maakond), and these into parishes, both units being headed by elders. As yet there was no central administration, although in times of danger several counties would combine their manpower for defensive purposes.